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## *The Agricultural Production Cooperative in the Period of Agricultural Collectivization in Poland up to 1956<sup>1</sup>*

### Abstract

In Poland after WW II the political power belonged to the communist parties. After (considered as falsified) elections in 1947 the Communist Polish Workers' Party (PPR) formally gained authority to rule in Poland and introduce laws corresponding with the communist ideology. In September 1948, after previous contrary policy, the PPR decided to start agricultural collectivization in Poland, which corresponded with the decision of the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform) about agricultural collectivization in all countries of the Soviet bloc. Soon after the unification of the PPR with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which resulted in establishing in December 1948 the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), which monopolized political power in Poland till 1989, the authorities began to prepare grounds for agricultural collectivization, i.e. to prepare monopolization of the agricultural production in Poland by the agricultural production cooperatives. In this first phase of collectivization (1949–1956) amendments were made to the Act of October 29, 1920, on cooperatives. The PZPR also started to issue instructions dealing with types of the cooperatives and their structure. There were also issued model by-laws of agricultural production cooperatives of different types. Simultaneously, the authorities applied measures (legal and illegal) to encourage countryside inhabitants to establish and take part in agricultural production cooperatives. Agricultural collectivization resulted in a decrease in the volume of agricultural goods, which with the failure in forcing farmers to participate in the system of agricultural production cooperatives, forced the authorities to change the approach to the issue of collectivization. In 1956 the PZPR decided to introduce major changes to the model of agricultural production cooperative, which resulted in the dissolution of the majority of created cooperatives.

**Keywords:** agricultural production cooperative, agricultural collectivization, 1949–1956, Poland, Polish People's Republic



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The agricultural production cooperative in Poland in the years 1948–1956 was the subject of scientific works; however, this was mainly in the field of sociology, politics, economics and history,<sup>2</sup> rather than in the legal sciences. It is understandable if one takes into account the importance of political ideology in the society under the communist rule and the decline of the significance of legal order in the communist legal system. The aim of this work is to present the legal regulation that formed the basis of the agricultural production cooperative, which was the legal form of collectivization in Poland, especially to present some details about the types of agricultural production cooperatives and rules in their model by-laws<sup>3</sup> (with the necessary historical and social background). The mentioned legal issues are rarely described in English language works,<sup>4</sup> which also focus mainly on historical facts, but can also provide some legal information.

The scope of this article is limited to the years 1948–1956, which are commonly considered the first phase of agricultural collectivization in Poland,<sup>5</sup> due to the fact that in this period the agricultural production cooperative was the legal form of collectivization in Poland. It was at this time that the agricultural production cooperative was introduced as a tool for collectivization and the majority of cooperatives in the People's Republic of Poland were created. After the change of the agrarian policy of the authorities in 1956, the number of agricultural production cooperatives rapidly decreased and their role diminished, and the state focused on introducing state-run agriculture enterprises (Polish: [Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne]" abbr. [PGR]) instead of agricultural production cooperatives.

## 1. Forms of joint agriculture production during the initial communist agricultural policy in Poland (1944–1948): Plot-settlement cooperatives and self-help villages

In the final phase of World War II and till 1948, the communists, which *de facto* ruled in the pre-WW2 territory of Poland (after it was regained from the occupation by Nazi Germany), were unwilling to introduce collective farming on a grander scale in Poland.<sup>6</sup> In fact, it was the individual farming that was a preferred model of agriculture at this

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<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive study see: Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja*; Jarosz, *Polityka*, 22–154; Turkowski, *Kolektywizacja*, 144–95. For a short comprehensive introduction into the subject see: Kaliński, "Forsowna kolektywizacja" (available in English – see below). See also: Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*; Robakowski, "Program."

<sup>3</sup> From Polish language works that provide information on the legal basis and regulations on the agricultural production cooperative in 1948–1956, see: Jarosz, *Polityka*, 22–40; Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 26–33, 78–86.

<sup>4</sup> On the legal regulations of an agricultural production cooperative and the collectivization of agriculture see: Kalinski, "Collectivisation" (this article is English version of the article: Kaliński, "Forsowna kolektywizacja"); Jarosz, "The Collectivization."

<sup>5</sup> See *i.a.*: Bład, *Sto lat*, 161; Hałamska, "The Evolution," 32; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 5; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*, 8–9; Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 25; Mickiewicz, Mickiewicz, Wawrzyniak, "Charakterystyczne cechy," 53.

<sup>6</sup> Bednarski, "Początki," 175–6.

first stage of establishing communist rules in Poland. The reasons for this approach were political,<sup>7</sup> economic<sup>8</sup> and psychological,<sup>9</sup> as well as philosophical (some Marxist theoreticians' precautions against hurried collectivization<sup>10</sup>). Even when some kinds of cooperation between farmers in agricultural production were established by themselves, authorities tried to counteract such situations, which resulted in a diminishing of individual farmers initiatives to start some kind of joint agricultural activity.<sup>11</sup>

Only some forms of joint agriculture production were supported by the authorities. Shortly after the end of the World War II, in 1946 the authorities allowed the establishment of plot-settlement cooperatives, aiming at re-housing and re-use of the granges (farmhouses with associated farmlands) located in the former north-eastern territories of the Third Reich, which after WW II became part of the Republic of Poland (from 1952 the People's Republic of Poland) according to the Potsdam Agreement (called in the Polish communists' propaganda as the Recovered Territories, Polish: [*Ziemie Odzyskane*]). However, this regulation was of minor significance, as its scope was limited to particular territories and the arriving settlers were more interested in individual ownership and individual farming than joint agricultural production.<sup>12</sup>

Another example of institutionalized cooperation allowed by the authorities was the process of creating settlements in the form of villages based on the self-help rule. In this model, the economics of the rural municipality was run by the municipality's cooperative, which e.g. build roads, powerlines and public utility buildings, but could also conduct agricultural activity. One of the main problems concerning such villages

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<sup>7</sup> Potentially negative effects of collectivization could weaken the support for the communist party in the society and strengthen anti-communist political forces. It should be noted that post-war elections were planned for 1947.

<sup>8</sup> The Polish economy was severely damaged during World War II. The effects of forced collectivization during the shortage of a labor force and livestock and with limited availability and affordability of agricultural machines could be catastrophic.

<sup>9</sup> Many farmers were strongly attached to the concept of the individual ownership of land, which was seen as a chance for prosperity, but also as a way of avoiding dependency on other people. Granting individual ownership of agricultural land to people living in the countryside, who previously did not own any land or owned only a small amount of it, was the main aim of the so-called "agrarian reform," which was started in Poland in 1944 by the Polish Committee of National Liberation's decree on the agricultural reform of 6th September, 1944 (pl: Dekret PKWN z dnia 6 września 1944 roku o przeprowadzeniu reformy rolnej), Dz.U. [Official Gazette] nr 4 poz. 17. The distribution of plots generally lasted till 1948, so it was additionally difficult to convince farmers, who had received agricultural land only a couple years before, to contribute such land to an agricultural production cooperative. Cf. Bednarski, "Początki," 187; Tkaczow, "The Propaganda," 230. About the reform of 1944 see: *i.a.*: Benken, "Między gwałtem," 114–5; Bład, *Sto lat*, 115ff; Halamska, "The Evolution," 31; Hartwell, "Determinants," 148; Jastrzębski, "Reforma," Luterek, *Reprywatyzacja*, 98–114; Matuszak, "Reforma," Skarżyński, "Dekret," Strykowski, *Powojnie*, 55–77. From English language works see: Jarosz, "The Collectivization," 114–5; Zawojka, "Process," 5.

<sup>10</sup> Later, in the literature, one can find the explicitly stated opinion that according to Lenin agrarian reform based on cooperatives can be successful only if some preliminary conditions had been met, especially the development of industry in a way that it can provide modern agricultural machines in an appropriate quality and quantity. See: Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Polityka*, 3–5.

<sup>11</sup> Kaliński, "Forsowna kolektywizacja," 111–2.

<sup>12</sup> Pawlak, *Prawo*, 63–4. Cf. Kaliński, "Forsowna kolektywizacja," 112; Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 22–3; Paliwoda, *Prawo*, 11–2. It is interesting that the majority of the agricultural production cooperatives were established in those "Recovered Territories." See: Hunek, *Spółdzielczość wiejska*, 1965, 29–30; Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Polityka*, 66; Kamiński, "Chłopi," 270–1; Tkaczow, "The Propaganda," 231; Witkowski, "Collectivization," 472. Even after 1989, this did not change. See: Mierzwa, "Rola," 299.

was whether they should create a separate organizational structure (separate union) or they should be included in existing structures of the cooperatives movement, as generally all cooperatives were obliged to associate in one of the cooperatives' unions (finally a compromise was reached and the cooperatives were to be included in the unions of the cooperatives of the same branch of activity).<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Political environment of introducing collectivization in Poland in 1948

The cautious approach to collectivization in Poland described above and postponing it for the appropriate but not specified time, changed "radically" in 1948. In February 1948 the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Polish Worker's Party (Polish: [Polska Partia Robotnicza], abbr.: [PPR]),<sup>14</sup> which ruled in Poland, issued instruction on the party's tasks concerning the reorganization of the countryside cooperatives structure which aimed to create agricultural production cooperatives as a common form of agriculture in the whole country with the participation of poorer peasants.<sup>15</sup> Also the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform) in the resolution issued in June 1948 urged the collectivization of agriculture in all of the countries controlled by the communist parties associated in the Bureau (representants of PPR voted in favor of the resolution, even as there were some restrictions in instructions given by its then Secretary General, Władysław Gomułka). Shortly after (in July 1948), at the sessions of the Central Committee of the PPR, lack of progress toward collectivization in Poland was used as an argument against Władysław Gomułka and his policies, who was deposed from the function of the Secretary General of the PPR in August 1948.<sup>16</sup> Agricultural cooperatives of three types: production cooperatives, sales cooperatives, and supplies cooperatives, were presented at these sessions as a "fundamental" method of new agrarian policy.<sup>17</sup>

The main aims and rules of the agricultural reforms were presented by Hilary Minc (member of the Central Committee of the PPR and its Politburo) at the session of the Central Committee of the PPR held on the 3rd of September 1948. Still, the advance to collectivization was proposed as a gradual process of creating agriculture cooperatives. The plan was that in one year (till the end of 1949) 1% of all farms should be owned

<sup>13</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 12–4, 49–51, 97. Cf. Kaliński, "Forsowna kolektywizacja," 112; Paliwoda, *Prawo*, 12–13; Strykowski, *Powojnie*, 150–2; Turkowski, "Chłopi," 43–4; Turkowski, *Kolektywizacja*, 141–2.

<sup>14</sup> Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 24. According to some views, this shift was the result of the internal power game that started in spring 1948 at the top of the communist PPR, which was aimed at the ousting from power of Władysław Gomułka (then the party's Secretary General) and other members of the party's leadership, who supported him. See: Kaliński, "Forsowna kolektywizacja," 113, 115–6. Cf. Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 14–5; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*, 54–5.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Tkaczow, "The Propaganda," 208–9; see also: Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 52; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*, 64–5; Kaliński, "Forsowna kolektywizacja," 113, 115–6; Paliwoda, *Prawo*, 13–4; Wązniewski, "Forsowna kolektywizacja," 30.

<sup>17</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 31–2.

by agriculture cooperatives (2% in 1950 and 3% in 1951). Participation in agriculture cooperatives was to be restricted only to farmers owning small and medium acreage and only on a voluntary basis. Wealthier farmers with lots of agricultural land were seen as a capitalistic element that should be ultimately eliminated. It was emphasized that participation in a cooperative would not require the transfer of ownership of the agricultural land.<sup>18</sup> From three types of rural cooperatives, the production cooperative was presented as an institution of key significance and a final stage of the process of transformation from “lower” forms of cooperatives (sales and support cooperatives) to a “higher” form – the agricultural production cooperative.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Amendments to Law on cooperatives

Until the end of World War II in Poland, cooperatives (including agricultural) were regulated by the law from 1920 on cooperatives<sup>20</sup> in a version that had been adopted in 1934.<sup>21</sup> Some minor changes to it were made in 1945<sup>22</sup> and 1947,<sup>23</sup> that is, before the political decision for collectivization.

Even before the session of the Central Committee of the PPR held on the 3rd of September 1948, which decided about the collectivization of agriculture, the Polish Sejm (then the only chamber of the Polish parliament) adopted the Law on the Central Cooperative Union and cooperative headquarters.<sup>24</sup> The scope of this regulation included not only existing cooperatives operating in agriculture, but cooperatives in general (e.g. housing cooperatives,

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–3; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*, 117–8; Kaliński, “Forsowna kolektywizacja,” 113–4; Tkaczow, “The Propaganda,” 209, 222.

<sup>19</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 33, 44–5. Cf. Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 123. In December 1948 the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR), that monopolized political power in Poland till 1989, was created as the result of the unification of the PPR with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Its agriculture policy was included in the Ideological Declaration of the Polish United Workers’ Party, adopted in December 1948. It was the continuation of the described agrarian policy of the PPR. Agriculture was to be organized as a system based on agriculture cooperatives. The main emphasis was put on ideological aspects of collectivization (the agriculture cooperative as a way of the class struggle and fight against the wealthy farmers), rather than on economic benefits. See Kaliński, “Forsowna kolektywizacja,” 114. See also: Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 55–7; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*, 67–8; Tkaczow, “The Propaganda,” 232.

<sup>20</sup> Law of 29 October 1920 on cooperatives, Dz.U. R.P. [Official Gazette] nr 111 poz. 733.

<sup>21</sup> Law of 29 October 1920 on cooperatives (consolidated text), Dz.U. R.P. [Official Gazette] 1934 nr 55 poz. 495.

<sup>22</sup> Decree of 24 August 1945 on the amendment to the Law of 29 October 1920 on cooperatives, Dz.U. [Official Gazette] nr 34 poz. 205. The amendment allowed the Council of Ministers to order the merger of cooperative audit unions (with Council of Ministers establishing principles of the merger and by-laws), as well as to order in “exceptional economic circumstances” the merger of particular cooperatives (with Council of Ministers establishing principles of the merger and by-laws).

<sup>23</sup> Decree of 28 October 1947 on the amendment to the Law on cooperatives, Dz.U. [Official Gazette] nr 66 poz. 401. The amendment allowed Cooperative Audit Union of Polish Republic (sometimes translated as: “Cooperative Union in Poland” see: Bierzanek, *Zarys*, 2) to perform administrative and economic activities commissioned to it under special regulations.

<sup>24</sup> Law of 21 May 1948 on the Central Cooperative Union and cooperative headquarters, Dz.U. R.P. [Official Gazette] nr 30 poz. 199.

crafts cooperatives, etc.). The general effect of this law was the compulsory associating of all of the existing cooperatives in one structure with a superior body named the Superior Cooperative Council and the liquidation of the Cooperative Audit Union of the Polish Republic (art. 35 para. 1) and the State Cooperative Council (art. 40 para. 1), that were created on the grounds of the mid-war regulation on cooperatives of 1920. The new regulation created a two-tier system: every cooperative was required to belong to the relevant (based on the branch of economy in which it mainly operated) cooperative headquarters (art. 29 para. 1), which itself must be a member of the Central Cooperative Union (art. 5 para. 1). In general terms, each cooperative was obliged to execute the resolutions of the cooperative headquarters it was a member of, and each cooperative headquarters was obliged to follow instructions given by the relevant ministers.<sup>25</sup>

The most important amendment was the Law of 20 December 1949,<sup>26</sup> which introduced changes to the Law on cooperatives of 1920, put in force from the 31st of December 1949. The regulation greatly diminished the autonomy of cooperatives and subjugated them to the authorities-dependent body (the Central Cooperative Union), e.g. according to new provisions of the Law on cooperatives of 1920, the Central Cooperative Union: could decide to dispose of the enterprise run by the cooperative with all immovable and movable property belonging to this enterprise in whole or in part (on the motion of a general meeting of the cooperative or relevant union of cooperatives; art. 46<sup>1</sup> para. 1); give instructions on the rules for the distribution of a pure surplus (art. 57 para. 1); could order dissolution of the cooperative (on the motion of the relevant union of cooperatives; art. 75 para. 1 point 5)<sup>27</sup>.

#### 4. By-laws of the agricultural production cooperatives

One of the main prerogatives of the Central Cooperative Union was the issuance of model by-laws for each type of cooperative (art. 5 para. 1 of the Law on cooperatives, amended in 1949). There was not one universal type of agricultural production cooperative, but three models of it, and three corresponding model by-laws. Farmers were allowed to decide which type of cooperative they wanted to establish and which degree of joint management they wanted to agree to. The possibility for farmers to choose the preferred model of collectivization was a distinctive feature of the Polish model. Another one was that from the models of collectivization (Soviet and Bulgarian), the Polish authorities introduced forms of that still allowed individual ownership of agricultural land by farmers. On one hand it was due to the effects of the agrarian reform of 1946; on the other it was done to encourage farmers to associate in agriculture cooperatives.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 15, 21; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*, 118; Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 32–3; Pietrzykowski, “A Century of Codification,” 56.

<sup>26</sup> Law of 20 December 1949 on amending the Law of 29 October 1920 on cooperatives and the Law of 21 May 1948 on the Central Cooperative Union and cooperative headquarters [Official Gazette] nr 65 poz. 524.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Pietrzykowski, “A Century of Codification,” 57.

<sup>28</sup> Kaliński, “Forsowna kolektywizacja,” 115. Cf. Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 25; Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 27.

The general concepts of each type of agricultural production cooperative were already presented during the session of the Central Committee of PPR held in August–September 1948. The first type, the cultivation association (Polish: [zrzeszenie uprawowe]), was the least formal, and generally involved joint cultivation, sowing and harvesting, without any land contribution. The second model, the manufacturing union (Polish: [zjednoczenie wytwórcze]), did require the transfer of some rights to land and/or livestock ownership, and was introducing a rule that the income would be divided in proportion to the transferred assets. The third one, the manufacturing association (Polish: [związek wytwórczy]) also involved the transferring of some rights to land and/or livestock, but the income was divided according to the amount of work of the member of the cooperative and not in relation to the worth of the assets contributed to the cooperative. The above-described models, became the rules for the three model by-laws of agricultural cooperative (respectively: the Land Cultivation Association – Polish: [Zrzeszenie Uprawy Ziemi], abbr. [ZUZ]), the Agricultural Manufacturing Cooperative [Polish: “Rolnicza Spółdzielnia Wytwórcza,” abbr. RSW], and the Agricultural Cooperative Group (Polish: [Rolniczy Zespół Spółdzielczy], abbr. [RZS]).<sup>29</sup>

The Land Cultivation Association resembled and was thought of as an analogy to the Soviet Joint Land Cultivation Association. In fact, it can hardly be recognized as a “cooperative” in legal terms, but it was more like an agreement about using other members work and machines. All of the agricultural land owned by the member, nonetheless, cultivated individually or jointly, remained the personal ownership of the member (thus there was no “land contribution” in legal terms). It was the member who decided which agricultural land would be used jointly and for which purposes (e.g. cultivation, storage). Depending on the resolution of the General Meeting of the Members, crops on the lands dedicated by the members for the common cultivation could be harvested individually or jointly. In the latter case, crops were distributed among the members in proportion to the amount of the land dedicated for joint cultivation. Members paid the costs of the “cooperative” at the same rate. The agricultural activity was to be performed by the members themselves, with their own machines (rented out to the “cooperative” at some price).<sup>30</sup>

The Agricultural Manufacturing Cooperative and the Agricultural Cooperative Group were an analogy of the Soviet *artel*. In all of the above types of agricultural production cooperative, it was obligatory to transfer rights (formally ownership still belonged to the farmer) to use and collect benefits from all of the agricultural land (both used for agriculture purposes and non-used, i.e. wastelands), forests and waters owned by the member with the exception of residential buildings (dwellings), outbuildings, land under buildings, courtyards and a little amount of land left for personal use of the member. Also almost all of the livestock, machines and other items of agricultural purpose that belonged to the farmer had to be transferred to a cooperative. With minor exceptions, every member had to work for the cooperative no less than 100 so-called “accounting days”

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<sup>29</sup> Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Polityka*, 53–4. Cf. Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja*, 33–4; Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 34–5; Jarosz, *Polityka*, 23–5; Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 119; Some authors indicate a fourth model (since 1951): the Agricultural Cooperative Association (Polish: [Rolnicze Zrzeszenie Spółdzielcze], abbr. [RZS]), a sub-type of Land Cultivation Association. See: Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 34; Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 119–20; Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 26; Paliwoda, *Prawo*, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 27–8.

in a year. How to calculate those “accounting days” was regulated in special sheets, which differentiated works and their “workload” on the grounds of the qualification, difficulty and importance of the particular task. In the case of the Agricultural Cooperative Group, the “accounting days” system was the only method of the distribution of the part of the income that was to be divided among the members of the cooperative (the more “accounting days,” the more profit was transferred to the member). In the case of the Agricultural Manufacturing Cooperative, this method was applied to 60–70% of the part of the income that was to be divided among the members (other parts of that income was distributed in proportion to the amount of the land contributed and the value of the other assets contributed to a cooperative).<sup>31</sup>

Bodies of the agricultural production cooperatives were: General Meeting (decision-making body), Management Board (executive body), the President of the Board, Audit Board and Fellow Members Arbitration Board. The main role in the day-to-day functioning was played by the President of the Board, whose duty was the management of the cooperative.<sup>32</sup>

In 1953, new templates of model by-laws of agricultural production cooperative were published, which reflected more the Soviet system of the “kolkhoz.” Still, major differences between the Soviet and Polish concept of agricultural production cooperative were maintained. Especially the possibility to retain ownership of agricultural land by member of the cooperative and the possibility to divide income in other ways than in proportion to work, were still included in the text of the framework by-laws.<sup>33</sup> Sovietization of the by-laws was reflected e.g. in introducing the rule in the by-laws of the Agricultural Manufacturing Cooperative and the Agricultural Cooperative Group that if a member did not work 100 “accounting days” in the year or avoided work in times of “special significance” such as sowings or harvests, he/she would lose the right to his/her part of the income, and that part would be transferred to the Invest Fund of the cooperative.<sup>34</sup> Another modification was imposing a duty on an Audit Board of a quarterly controlling of the Management Board and to report conclusions to the General Meeting.<sup>35</sup>

## 5. Constitution of the People’s Republic of Poland and enshrinement status of agricultural production cooperatives in the constitutional principles

The political and doctrinal significance of the agricultural production cooperative was reflected in the provisions of the communist constitution of 1952.<sup>36</sup> According to art. 10 para. 2, first sentence of this act, the People’s Republic of Poland gives special sup-

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–30.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Polityka*, 73–4; Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Z problemów*, 125–6.

<sup>34</sup> Jarosz, *Polityka*, 32.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–3.

<sup>36</sup> Constitution of the Polish People’s Republic, Dz.U. [Official Gazette] nr 33 poz. 232.

port and comprehensive assistance to the agricultural production cooperatives, which are forms of a team economy formed on a voluntary basis. The next provision stated that through the use of methods of the most efficient joint cultivation and mechanization of labor, the team economy enables the working peasants to achieve a breakthrough in production and is a means for the complete removal of exploitation in the countryside and the rapid and significant improvement of its welfare and culture (art. 10 para. 2, second sentence). Finally, para. 3 of the same article provided that the main forms of state support and assistance for agricultural production cooperatives are: state machinery centers, which provide the opportunity to apply modern technology, and “cheap” state loans. Art. 11 of the Constitution of the Polish People’s Republic stated that the State supports the development of various forms of the cooperative movement in urban and rural areas. The same article confirmed special protection of cooperative property as a type of a so-called social property (communist theory of property differentiated social property and private property),<sup>37</sup> which guarding was also the obligation of every citizen of the People’s Republic of Poland (art. 77 para. 1).<sup>38</sup> Finally, in art. 58 para. 2 of the Constitution, it was stated that the right to work is ensured by social ownership of the basic means of production, the development in the countryside of a social-cooperative system, that was “free from exploitation.”

Including agricultural production cooperatives into the constitutional regulations had an important impact on the very perception of cooperatives and legal norms which concerned them. The model of the agricultural production cooperative as a way of transformation into the socialist country, was elevated to the status of a constitutional principle. Problems with incorrectly adopted model by-laws (without the needed resolution of the Central Cooperative Union confirming the drafts as “model by-laws”) and invalid promulgation (outside of the official journal “Monitor Polski”) lost their importance when the so-called “will working people of cities and villages” enshrined agricultural production cooperatives in the Constitution among the most basic state principles. Formally invalid, the model by-laws described above started to be treated as a part of the binding legal system, with no option for a cooperative to adopt by-laws that differed from the model ones. It was only in 1956, during the Second National Production Cooperative Convention, that the possibility of the introduction of some changes to the by-laws (that resulted in the difference between the by-laws of the particular cooperative and the model by-laws) was confirmed.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Wiśniewski, *Gwarancje*, 70.

<sup>38</sup> See further: Ratajczak, “Obowiązek,” 187ff.

<sup>39</sup> Paliwoda, *Prawo*, 20–2, 29.

## 6. Social reaction and effects of collectivization in Poland (1948–1956)

The abrupt decision of collectivization in 1948 and the pressure to achieve a rate of 1% per year of farms registered in the agricultural production cooperatives, was not commonly accepted in the society, putting things mildly.<sup>40</sup> Even within the members of the PZPR there were some critics of the collectivization; however, the top bodies of the PZPR tried to counteract any signs of opposition.<sup>41</sup> To overcome the unwillingness of farmers to associate themselves with the cooperatives, the authorities used a variety of measures, from propaganda, literature, organized visits of farmers to other countries (that had “achieved collectivization”),<sup>42</sup> tax exemptions or tax preferences,<sup>43</sup> electrification,<sup>44</sup> mandatory contributions of milk and livestock (significantly greater for individual farmers),<sup>45</sup> legal measures<sup>46</sup> to brutal repressions.<sup>47</sup> Similar measures (especially tax mechanisms and compulsory de-

<sup>40</sup> For a comprehensive study of the social response to collectivization see: Skonieczny, *Postawy*. See also: Błąd, *Sto lat*, 163–4; Jarosz, *Polityka*, 89–98; Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 120–2; Kura, *Aparat*, 245–59. The variety of objections to collectivization raised by farmers in some parts of the Poland, but probably represented in other parts of the country, is presented In: Bednarski, “Początki,” 178–81; Markiewicz, “Kolektywizacja rolnictwa w powiatach,” 61–2; Próchniak, “Opór wsi,” 274–7; Straszak-Chandoła, *Ziemie*, 215–6; Strykowski, *Powojnie*, 150. About the examples of reactions to collectivization (or plans to introduce it) see *i.a.* Benken, “Między gwałtem,” 123–6; Cimała, “Chłopi,” 220–4; Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 128–9; Kamiński, “Opór wsi,” 266–9; Markiewicz, “Kolektywizacja rolnictwa w powiatach,” 62–6; Markiewicz, “Kolektywizacja rolnictwa w województwie,” 134–5; Markiewicz, *Kolektywizacja*, 339–64; Próchniak, “Chłopi,” 277–90. See also: Hinc, *Próba*, 219ff; Straszak-Chandoła, *Ziemie*, 217–20. Apart from the unwillingness and resistance of farmers to associate themselves with the cooperatives, the clergy of the Catholic Church publicly advocated against collectivization see: Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 131–2; Żaryn, “Kościół,” 167ff.

<sup>41</sup> Kaliński, “Forsowna kolektywizacja,” 116–7.

<sup>42</sup> For a comprehensive study on the visits see: Turkowski, *Kolektywizacja*, 109ff.

<sup>43</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 54. Cf. Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja*, 76–9. For example in 1949 members of the Land Cultivation Associations were granted 30% tax preference of land tax concerning land dedicated for joint cultivation according to § 1 of the Ordinance of the Minister of Public Administration of March 7, 1949 issued in consultation with the Ministers of the Treasury and Agriculture and Agrarian Reform on the reduction of land tax for members of land cultivation associations and for agricultural manufacturing cooperatives and agricultural cooperative groups, Dz.U. [Official Gazette] nr 16 poz. 101. On the grounds of § 2 of the same ordinance, other cooperatives were granted tax reduction in 1949 to 3.5% of the tax base. These reductions resulted also in the reduction of the annual savings contributions to the Social Savings Fund of Agriculture, on the grounds of legal reference in art. 23 para. 4 Law of 30 January 1948 on the obligation of social saving Dz.U. [Official Gazette] nr 10 poz. 74. Cf. Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 28, 30. Similar tax preferences were continued in the following years see: Błąd, *Sto lat*, 164–5; Jarosz, *Polityka*, 41–3.

<sup>44</sup> Miernik, “Represje,” 230.

<sup>45</sup> Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 28. Cf. Błąd, *Sto lat*, 165–6; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 71; Straszak-Chandoła, *Ziemie*, 234–5; Turkowski, *Kolektywizacja*, 161–3.

<sup>46</sup> About ways of using the judicial system and public prosecution in enforcing collectivization see: Kura, “Wymiar,” 186ff. See also: Bereza, “Chłopi,” 302–5.

<sup>47</sup> Tkaczow, “The Propaganda,” 210ff. Cf. Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 125–6; Nadolski, “Pośrednie metody,” 80–5; Turkowski, “Chłopi,” 52–61; Witkowski, “Collectivization,” 473–4. See also: Benken, “Między gwałtem,” 122–3, 127–30; Bereza, “Chłopi,” 296–302; Czarnecki, “Metody,” 454–61; Gryciuk, “Kolektywizacja,” 156–7; Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 27; Majchrzak, “Wytyczne,” 201ff; Markiewicz, “Kolektywizacja rolnictwa w województwie,” 132–3; Robakowski, “Program,” 21; Wązniewski, “Forsowna kolektywizacja,” 32–3, 35–6. See further: Jarosz, *Polityka*, 40–59; Kura, *Aparat*, 80ff; Markiewicz, *Kolektywizacja*, 141–305; Miernik, “Represje,” 231ff.

liveries<sup>48</sup>) were taken in other countries of the Soviet bloc, e.g. in Albania,<sup>49</sup> Baltic States,<sup>50</sup> Bulgaria,<sup>51</sup> Czechoslovakia,<sup>52</sup> Hungary,<sup>53</sup> German Democratic Republic,<sup>54</sup> Romania,<sup>55</sup> and Yugoslavia.<sup>56</sup>

It must be noted that as illusionary as it was till 1956, voluntary participation in a cooperative was later highlighted by the communist authorities as a “first and overarching” principle of collectivization in agriculture.<sup>57</sup> The effect of the communist authorities actions was that in 1949 there were 243 agricultural production cooperatives, while in 1955 there were c. 9,750 of them.<sup>58</sup> However, the pressure caused by the PZPR bodies to establish agricultural production cooperatives resulted in creating many of them just in order to meet the rate of collectivization. There was even the phenomenon of rivalry between the voivodships and counties to establish more agricultural production cooperatives. Frequently creating cooperatives was done without economic reasons.<sup>59</sup>

Even as voices of critics and signs of disappointment were manifested more openly after the death of Stalin in 1953, it was only in May 1956 that the PZPR changed its approach to collectivization.<sup>60</sup> Formally, the change of the approach toward collectivization was confirmed at the VIII Session of Central Committee of the PZPR, held in October 1956. Hurried collectivization was officially condemned and the party urged for strengthening the prospective cooperatives, but what is also important, the party called for the dissolution of cooperatives that lacked chances for proper functioning.<sup>61</sup> The vol-

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<sup>48</sup> Swain, “Eastern European Collectivization,” 518–9.

<sup>49</sup> Sjöberg, “Any Other Road,” 379–82.

<sup>50</sup> Feest, “The Collectivization,” 96ff.

<sup>51</sup> Gruev, “Collectivization,” 338–9, 343; Marinova, Nenovsky, “Cooperative Agricultural,” 59; Witkowski, “Collectivization,” 476–7.

<sup>52</sup> Rychlík, “Collectivization,” 193–6; Pollák, “The Emergence,” 178–9.

<sup>53</sup> See i.a.: Kovács, “The Forced Collectivization,” 216; Kovács, “The Last Wave,” 175–6; Varga, “Practices,” 446; Varga, “The Appropriation,” 436–7, 439.

<sup>54</sup> Schöne, “Ideology,” 151–2.

<sup>55</sup> Iordachi, Dobrinicu, “The Collectivization,” 161–3; Witkowski, “Collectivization,” 486–7. Cf. Micu, “Collectivization,” 65.

<sup>56</sup> Bokovoy, “Collectivization,” 312–3.

<sup>57</sup> Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Polityka*, 4–5. See also (from economical point of view) Hunek, *Czynniki*, 356–7.

<sup>58</sup> Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Z problemów*, 124. Cf. Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 134.

<sup>59</sup> Kaliński, “Forsowna kolektywizacja,” 116–8; Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Polityka*, 58–60, 70–1; Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Z problemów*, 120; Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 29, 52, 61; Robakowski, “Program,” 20–1.

<sup>60</sup> The change in the agrarian policy was as sudden as was the decision of starting the collectivization in 1948. Even in February 1956 the Central Committee PPR still opted for collectivization according to previous plans and planned to achieve 25–30% of farmers’ land to be included in the system of agricultural production cooperatives till 1960. Even in May 1956, at the Second National Production Cooperative Convention, some of the representatives of the authorities stated about the necessity of continuing the collectivization policy. However, other participants in the convention openly criticized some issues in the cooperative model introduced by the authorities (e.g. government and party interference in management, as well as inadequate state support). Some authors consider this convention as a turning point and the end of the first phase of the collectivization of agriculture in Poland. See: Kaliński, “Forsowna kolektywizacja,” 119–20. Cf. Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Polityka*, 87–8; Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Z problemów*, 131–2. It should be noted that the above mentioned convention was held after the death of Bolesław Bierut on the 12th of March, 1956 (Secretary General of the PZPR, who took office after Wiesław Gomułka).

<sup>61</sup> Kaliński, “Forsowna kolektywizacja,” 120; Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Z problemów*, 138–9; Jarosz, *Polityka*, 38–40.

untarily membership in the cooperatives was stressed, and self-management of the cooperatives and support for other forms of joint activity in agriculture, as well as the possibility to acquire agricultural machines by the cooperatives was proposed (previously state institutions – State Machinery Centers [Polish: [Państwowe Ośrodki Maszynowe]] provided them). In October, started a “fever” of cooperatives dissolution and till the end of November c. 75% were dissolved (in June 1956 there was 9,975 agriculture production cooperatives; as at the 31st of December 1956 there were only 1 534).<sup>62</sup>

The communist authorities stated by themselves that in 1950–1953 agricultural production increased only by 10%, assessed non-used agricultural land to the amount of c. 400,000,00 ha, and admitted that the grain supply required grain import.<sup>63</sup> Simultaneously, after reaching the threshold of 9,000 agricultural production cooperatives, there were shortages in necessary agricultural machines.<sup>64</sup> Finally, collectivization had resulted in a decrease in agriculture production.<sup>65</sup> Despite the efforts of the communist authorities, at the peak of the number of agricultural production cooperatives, they covered c. 10% of land used for agriculture and associated less than 6% of individual agricultural farms.<sup>66</sup>

## 7. Conclusions

As the decisive changes in the communist states were not the new legislation but the new *de facto* policies of the communist party and authorities, the change in the situation of the agricultural production cooperatives in Poland was more the result of the new PZPR approach rather than new laws.

In January 1957 “Instructions of the Central Committee of the PZPR and Supreme Committee of the United People’s Party (Polish: [Naczelny Komitet Zjednoczonego Stronnictwa Ludowego]) on the agrarian policy” was issued. The document announced new legal regulations dealing with the assets of the liquidated cooperatives.<sup>67</sup> The docu-

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<sup>62</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 89–94; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*, 141–2. Cf. Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 39–40; Jarosz, *Polityka*, 152–3; Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 120, 136; Mickiewicz, Mickiewicz, Wawrzyniak, “Charakterystyczne cechy,” 57. Some authors (e.g. Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 31) see additional motivation in the dissolution of cooperatives in the particular system of the distribution of the assets of the agricultural production cooperatives. In the case of other cooperatives, according to art. 27 para. 4 and art. 76 para. 3 Law on the cooperatives (consolidated text), Dz.U. [Official Gazette] 1950 nr 25 poz. 232, an investment fund must not be distributed among the members of the dissolved cooperative. However in the case of the agricultural production cooperative not only contributed assets were returned to the members, but also this fund was distributed (in proportion to the contributed assets given by the members to the cooperative). See also: Bierzanek, *Zarys*, 65.

<sup>63</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 79. However, the reliability of communist statistics can be controversial see: Benken, “Między gwałtem,” 120–1.

<sup>64</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 84; Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Z problemów*, 133–4. Cf. Gryciuk, “Kolektywizacja,” 162; Jarosz, “The Collectivization,” 135. Interesting notions about the problems with availability of agricultural machines in Wielkopolska province, but reflecting the situation in the whole country, are included in the work: Strykowski, *Powojnie*, 140–5.

<sup>65</sup> Hunek, *Czynniki*, 361–2. Cf. Kulikowski, *Produkcja*, 11; Dobieszewski, *Kolektywizacja*, 118ff.

<sup>66</sup> Hunek, *Spółdzielczość produkcyjna*, 31.

<sup>67</sup> Jarecka-Kimłowska, *Polityka*, 171–2.

ment started a new approach to the joint agricultural activity in Poland. From this moment on, the rule of the free development of cooperativeness in agricultural of any kind and the rule of internal self-governance were said to be observed by the authorities.<sup>68</sup> The problem between the self-governance of cooperatives and central planning was still visible, but it was proposed to be solved as in the example of Czechoslovakia and Hungary.<sup>69</sup>

In practice the model by-laws of cooperatives were not binding, as authorities allowed farmers to modify the by-laws frameworks and adjust them to their particular situation, especially as the land contribution in the types of cooperatives called the Agricultural Manufacturing Cooperative and the Agricultural Cooperative Group ceased to be treated as mandatory.<sup>70</sup> Focus on the development of the PGR system and decreased interest of the PZPR in agricultural production cooperatives, resulted in the situation in which many issues concerning agricultural production cooperatives were not precisely regulated by the law, i.e. the obligation to contribute land and the scope of this obligation, form of fulfilling this obligation, rights of member and rights of cooperatives related to contributed land, and form of returning contributed land after withdrawal of the member from the cooperative.<sup>71</sup> This state of affairs lasted till 1961, when a new law on cooperatives was introduced.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Jarecka-Kimlowska, *Z problemów*, 166.

<sup>69</sup> The proposed solution was based on the differentiation between "macroeconomic" and "microeconomic" decisions. The first were reserved to the authorities, the second left to the cooperative. See: Hunek, *Spółdzielczość wiejska*, 1971, 30–1.

<sup>70</sup> Ławniczak, *Rolnicza spółdzielczość*, 58–9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Mickiewicz, Mickiewicz, Wawrzyniak, "Charakterystyczne cechy," 55.

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